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Ex CIA Agent Who Interrogated Saddam Hussein Says US Was Wrong About Him

Post by  Anita Patrick December 20, 2016

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Now, a former CIA agent who interrogated Hussein says the United States were wrong in their perception of the dictator.

Hussein was captured in a spider hole and looked quite unkempt and unrecognisable. Therefore, he had to be identified as Saddam Hussein before the troops could notify the president at the time, George W. Bush. It was at this point that CIA analyst, John Nixon came in contact with Saddam Hussein.

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In order to be sure the person they had found was not a “body double”, Nixon told them about tribal tattoos on Saddam’s right hand and wrist, the bullet scar on his left leg and that his lower lip tended to droop to one side.

The myth – and it was a myth – that Saddam maintained multiple lookalikes was a source of wry amusement to those of us who worked in intelligence, but I decided silence was the better part of valour and started compiling a list of questions only the dictator could answer.

The military was flying the putative Saddam to Baghdad airport that night and it was decided we'd make the identification there.

At midnight, after a long wait, the convoy was ready. Men in night-vision goggles drove us at 100mph down the Airport Road, a no-go zone at night. At the airport, a side road led to a series of low-slung blockhouses that once housed Saddam's Special Republican Guard. Inside, I found pandemonium and another wait until finally a GI said, 'OK, guys. You're up.'

Nixon added that when he came in contact with Saddam Hussein he noticed he had an air of confidence despite knowing that he would be facing a death sentence soon.

I spoke first through a translator. 'I have some questions I'd like to ask you, and you are to answer them truthfully. Do you understand?'

Saddam nodded. 'When was the last time you saw your sons alive?'

I expected Saddam to be defiant, but I was taken aback by the aggression of his reply: 'Who are you guys? Are you military intelligence? Mukhabarat [civilian intelligence]? Answer me. Identify yourselves!'

I noted his tribal tattoos and that his mouth drooped. Now I needed to see his bullet wound. There was so much we wanted to know. How had he escaped from Baghdad? Who had helped him? He would not say, answering only the questions he wanted to.

'Why don't you ask me about politics? You could learn a lot from me,' he barked. He was especially vocal on the rough treatment he'd received from the troops who brought him in, launching a long diatribe.

I was incredulous. Here was a man who didn't think twice about killing his own people complaining about a few scratches. He lifted his dishdasha to show the damage to his left leg. I saw an old scar. Was it the bullet wound, I asked him. He assented with a grunt – the final piece of proof. We'd got him.



Saddam Hussein after his capture.

Knowing that they had indeed got Saddam Hussein and not a “body double”, Nixon proceeded to ask

questions about the Iraqi regime, the terrorist claims and Weapons of Mass Destruction [WMD]

'You found a traitor who led you to Saddam Hussein. Isn't there one traitor who can tell you where the WMDs are?' He warmed to the subject, saying Americans were a bunch of ignorant hooligans who did not understand Iraq and were intent on its destruction.

'Iraq is not a terrorist nation,' he said. 'We did not have a relationship with (Osama) bin Laden, and did not have weapons of mass destruction... and were not a threat to our neighbours. But the American President [George W Bush] said Iraq wanted to attack his daddy and said we had 'weapons of mass destruction.'

Ignoring his goading, we asked Saddam if he'd ever considered using WMDs pre-emptively against US troops in Saudi Arabia.

'We never thought about using weapons of mass destruction. It was not discussed. Use chemical weapons against the world? Is there anyone with full faculties who would do this? Who would use these weapons when they had not been used against us?'

Nixon writes that he had not expected this response from Hussein. The former CIA analyst began pondering on how America had gotten their perception of Hussein and the Iraqi regime so wrong.

Saddam had an answer: 'The spirit of listening and understanding was not there – I don't exclude myself from this blame.' It was a rare acknowledgment that he could have done more to create a clearer picture of Iraq's intentions.

Was he playing with us, twisting the truth to spare his pride?

I asked about his notorious use of chemical weapons against the Kurdish city of Halabja during the Iran-Iraq war. He became furious. 'I am not afraid of you or your president. I will do what I have to do to defend my country!'

Then he turned to me and sneered: 'But I did not make that decision.'



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Saddam was quick, too, to deny involvement in 9/11. 'Look at who was involved,' he said. 'What countries did they come from? Saudi Arabia. And this [ringleader] Muhammad Atta, was he an Iraqi? No. He was Egyptian. Why do you think I was involved in the attacks?'

Saddam had actually believed 9/11 would bring Iraq and America closer because Washington would need his secular government to help fight fundamentalism. How woefully wrong he had been.

During our talks, we often heard muffled explosions. Saddam inferred things were not going well for the US forces and took pleasure in the fact. 'You are going to fail,' he said. 'You are going to find that it is not so easy to govern Iraq.' History has proved him right. But back then, I was curious why he felt that way.

'Because you do not know the language, the history, and the Arab mind,' he said. 'It's hard to know the Iraqi people without knowing its weather and its history. The difference is between night and day and winter and summer. That's why they say the Iraqis are hard-headed – because of the summer heat.'

Nixon concluded this chapter by stating that regardless of the misconception of America about Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi government, he is not denying that Hussein was a ruthless dictator “who plunged his region into chaos and bloodshed”, but in retrospect, he believes killing the former president was a “wasted effort of our brave men and women in uniform and the rise of Islamic State, not to mention the £2.5 trillion spent to build a new Iraq.”

Nixon writes more about his interrogation with Saddam Hussein in his book, **Debriefing the President: The Interrogation of Saddam Hussein** which can be gotten on Amazon.

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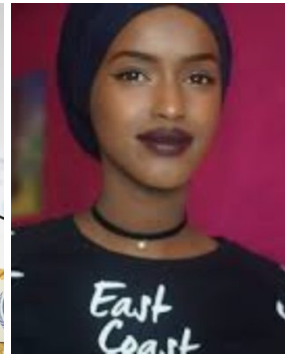
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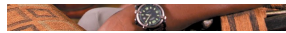
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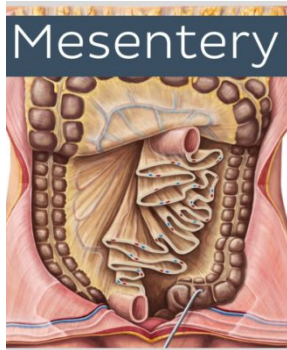
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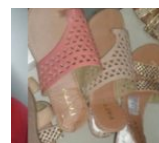
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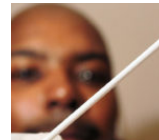
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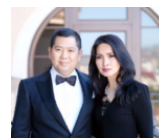
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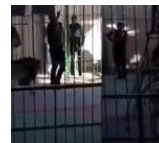
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